University Archives

"See them standing on the corner.
"Who are they?" you ask.

P81.0403.(01)

Vol. 61 E2 Nov. 3, 2025

THE INNIS HERALD

V61 2025–26
The Innis Herald

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Julian Apolinario

MANAGING EDITOR
Marty Hewitt

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
Bianca Mehrotra

CREATIVE DIRECTORS
Burak Batu Tunçel
Ario Shakarami

LAYOUT EDITORS
Kiersten Herborth
Chloe Gong--Miniere

PODCAST PRODUCER
Simbarashe S. Mutika

STAFF ILLUSTRATOR
Neecole Fabian

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Isabella Smith

SENIOR COPY EDITOR
Rick Lu

JUNIOR COPY EDITORS
Callie Zhang
Katherine Chen
Theo Whittington

JUNIOR LAYOUT EDITOR
Rowan Parkinson

JUNIOR PODCAST PRODUCER
Zachary Yin

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

There is something comforting about continuity, the idea that something can go on forever, whether it's a vacation, a relationship, or, in this case, a really fantastic student newspaper.

The Innis Herald was born in 1965, preceding most students at this university by four decades or more, and will long outlast our tenure at this institution. One of the beautiful things about an ongoing publication is that it gets to take so many different forms depending on who contributes to it. A publication is rarely an auteur work from an individual; rather, it is a work that reflects the sum of its parts in the form of the people who come together to make it happen. And with this being our sixtieth anniversary of operation, I am particularly thankful for the people who are here to help this publication celebrate its Diamond Anniversary. The Herald has looked dramatically different over the years; we've been colourful and artsy, monochromatic and serious, but what all these iterations have in common is a continued reflection of the voices in Innis student life. And that's something we hope to do even better, going forward.

As the Herald enters year sixty, I have begun to seriously consider what the future of this publication will look like. For years, the Herald has been functioning rigidly on a small budget, publishing just four issues annually, mostly in black and white, with very little compensation or support for the small team that produces and designs the finished product, while balancing scholastic and professional commitments. In the digital world, with printing physical products being the luxury that it is, the Herald's current pace forward is not sustainable with our current resources.

There will come a time in the very near future when the Innis Herald will undertake a stark change to our production capabilities, which will become clearer and more public in the coming months. When that time arrives, it is my most sincere hope that the students of Innis College will be willing to support our expansion beyond what we are now. We want to secure the role of the student publication at Innis, to safeguard our quantity and quality from the threat of rising costs, and to ensure that the independent voices of our journalists will remain unstifled.

This is an issue that I am particularly proud of. This Herald places a special focus on the roots of Innis College with our film journalism and TIFF coverage. You'll also see pieces on Innis' new librarian, about longstanding U of T projects, and some of the brightest voices in creative writing that the university has to offer. The Herald has been an outlet for many at Innis College, and if that hasn't been you yet... dude, what are you waiting for?

Happy Diamond Anniversary, Innis Herald. You look great for sixty.

Yours,

Julian Apolinario

Editor-In-Chief

The Innis Herald acknowledges this land on which both the University of Toronto and Innis College operate. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, it is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in and on Tkaronto.

What do Rare Books, D&D, and Innis Have in Common?

Meet Katie Middleton, the College's New Librarian!

Chloe Gong--Miniere

FEATURE

Nestled in the heart of Innis College's brick-red building, on the second floor of the East wing, sits the humble yet mighty Innis College Library. Consisting of four levels—though spanning only two floors—and organized around a metal staircase leading up to a luminous skylight, this spaceship-like area welcomes students, faculty, and visitors from Monday to Friday between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. With a collection focused on Cinema Studies and Writing & Rhetoric, the library supports the needs of Innis-affiliated programs and provides a quiet study space for members of the Innis community and other Robarts-adverse individuals.

When first entering the building, most visitors likely struggled, like I did, to navigate it. But for those lucky enough to figure out how to access the second floor, their efforts were no doubt rewarded by meeting the generous and insightful Innis Librarian, Kate Johnson. With a background in art history and experience at various other libraries, Kate joined Innis almost nine years ago, back in 2017. Over the years, she has become a beloved and essential part of the Innis community, and her enthusiasm and willingness to help are cherished by all. It is therefore with both joy and sadness that we at the *Herald* received the news of her temporary departure. As some readers may be aware, Kate has just gone on research leave until March 2026. For the majority of the remainder of this academic year, the library will operate under the guidance of its new librarian, Kathryn (Katie) Middleton.

Who is Katie?

I had the pleasure of sitting down with Katie at the end of her first day, with the goal of getting to know her and introducing her to the Innis and wider U of T community. Despite what must have been a long and busy day, I immediately felt the kindness and excitement radiating from her as we began our conversation. I can only hope that this article encourages Innissians to take her up on her invitation to drop in for a quick chat—and to visit the library if they haven't yet had the chance!

Katie completed her undergraduate degree at King's College in Halifax, majoring in Classics and Early Modern Studies. At the time, she had a sense she would continue her foray into academia, before realizing the diminishing appeal of constant publication and discovering, instead, "a love for teaching."

"Even though I worked at libraries throughout my undergrad, I never thought of it as a career for myself," she tells me. The field only revealed itself as a professional path while she was applying for grad school. She ended up joining the Master of Information program at UofT's Faculty of Information—commonly known as the iSchool—with a concentration in Library and Information Science (LIS) and Archives and Records Management (ARM), and a specialization in Book History and Print Culture. This degree combination allowed her to explore her passion for rare books and gave her the opportunity to learn about the concept of the book as a material object.

She was able to apply this knowledge in her previous role at Massey College, a non-circulating, solo-librarian space, where her duties included managing access to the collection, overseeing donations and acquisitions, helping students with coursework, as well as teaching—not just for library instruction sessions, but also classes on the history of the book. In addition, she organized a few exhibits, helping to curate display cases on treasures from the collection, and for special occasions such as the 60th anniversary of the institution.

Given her academic and professional background, it comes as no surprise that many of her interests revolve around books—in particular, their materiality and production, as well as the art and craft involved in making them. One of her hobbies is letterpress printing, which connects her directly to the physical side of bookmaking. In her free time, she also plays *Dungeons & Dragons*, enjoys cross-stitching, and (of course) reads widely. Though only a casual film viewer, she holds a soft spot for costume design in cinema. (I am happy to report to our CSI readers that she did attend TIFF, and also happens to be a *Lord of the Rings* fan.)

A New Challenge

In this role, Katie is looking forward to immersing herself in a new space and contributing to cataloguing, outreach, and community programming. The Innis Library, she says, represents "a challenge, but an exciting one."

Unlike at Massey, Innis relies on a team of student workers who take care of circulation tasks, act as the first point of contact, and contribute to various research and outreach projects. Learning how to work with a team will be a shift; another will be managing a larger, more diverse user base. One of the big tasks coming up is collection weeding, in preparation for the library's eventual move after the completion of Innis College's renovation. Katie will be helping to assess materials and work with the team on what stays, what goes, and what gets relocated. These efforts are part of the broader, ongoing work of ensuring that the library remains a relevant and welcoming space for years to come.

Though we will miss Kate dearly, we are so excited to welcome Katie. A defining feature of the Innis community is its warmth and openness—something that did not go unnoticed by Katie throughout the hiring process. "It made me want the job all the more," she says with a smile. After having met her, I am more than certain that she will fit right in!

Genesis: A Look At The Innis Herald of 1965

Sixty years ago, this paper began

Julian Apolinario

FEATURE

Picture this: it's the fall of 1965, and you're a student at the University of Toronto. The weather is good, it's the first year of having the snazzy new red and white Maple Leaf flag, and Lester B. Pearson, the coolest guy ever named Lester, is the Prime Minister. All things considered, things aren't terrible. Aside from the Leafs losing two straight to start the season, that is. Some things don't change...

As a student at Innis College, you're walking across campus, when, out of the corner of your eye, you spot a stack of papers. This being the 1960s, you've got no music in your earbuds or videos to scroll on your corded phone, so the newspaper is a pretty good way to entertain yourself and keep yourself informed. You pick up a paper, open it, and a tear falls from your eye as you begin to consume some of the greatest writing accessible to mankind. A chorus of angels begins to sing... though on second thought, that might just be the Innis Choir.

That's what I assume reading the Innis Herald, Volume One, Edition One, must have been like back then.

–

V1E1 looks very different from the Heralds of the modern day. It has no real cover to speak of; rather, the title of the publication in big block letters overlooks the rest of the first page. Its first piece is a call to action, slamming the ICSS Executives for cutting programs, calling them MAs: "masters of apathy." It's a good piece of satire, funny and biting, although uncredited.

What follows is a list of the masthead members, headed by Cheryl Zimmerman as Editor, with a call for a permanent managing editor, "dead or alive." It paints an interesting picture of Innis College in its second year of operation that echoes the descriptions in Innis' official history. The Herald was raw, a little silly, and unruly, much like its namesake college. The ICSS president, John Bayly, notes in his article that the year beforehand, Innis, as a new college, had a 100% freshman student body. I shudder at the thought of such a state of affairs. In that article, he brings up the same issue from the first piece, talking about student involvement in college life being necessary to nurture the embers of Innis at such an unfinished point in its history.

This issue features every type of article under the sun. A piece proposing that the Vietnam War be fought using celery stalks to reduce harm by 87%. A story from a devoted anti-communist perspective by a man named Hart Broudy (potentially the most conservatively-named individual I have ever come across). I was taken aback when I realized that when Innisians were writing about "going to Robarts" in '65, they did not mean a walk to the library, but rather a march on the legislature to see Premier John P. Robarts, leader of Ontario and namesake of the concrete peacock. This article in particular focused on the idea of an accessible education and the competing ideas of schooling as a privilege versus a human right for Canadians. There is then the unfortunate truth of Innis' collegiate sports teams using the title "Innis Indians," a relic of the past best left behind in 1965, but worthy of acknowledging as part of the state of Canadian society at the time. There is satire of corporate consumption, public criticism of the Varsity, and a big push for women's athletics. All together, a mixed bag that reflects the messy politics of the time, and the messy reality of the fledgling college (and its nubile newspaper) as it takes its first real steps.

Sixty years later, things are certainly different here at the Herald. From our historical vantage point, it is clear that the ideas expressed by the Innisians of 1965 are universal ideas for U of T students today. Questions about campus apathy and student involvement, emotions about foreign wars and political extremism, and the presence of an overbearing figure called Robarts are just as present now as they were back then. However, acknowledging and understanding our roots as Innisians is valuable as we become further and further removed from our foundation as the all-freshman institution back in the 1960s. Remember where you came from, Innis, and remember: those first freshmen were not so different from you or me.

A Spoiler-Free Review of *Hamnet* (2025) From an Ex-Theatre Kid

Giuliana Di Sanzo

CAPSULE MOVIE REVIEW

I was finishing up my last TIFF shift, working as an usher at the Lightbox, when I was informed that Chloé Zhao's *Hamnet* had won the People's Choice Award for the festival's 50th year. I had gotten tickets to a screening of the film a few days prior, but was unable to attend due to schedule conflicts. When my venue showed the film throughout the festival, attendees would exit the screening, wiping away tears from their eyes while proclaiming that they'd just seen one of the greatest films ever made. As an ex-theatre kid with a tattoo of John Everett Millais' *Ophelia* (1851-2), a film exploring the circumstances of William Shakespeare's life that inspired *Hamlet* was right up my alley. I was eager to find a way to be an audience member during one of the last screenings of the movie, and after speaking with my supervisor, he (seeing the anticipation in my eyes) was able to arrange a reserved seat for me at the next showing. As I entered the full theatre with popcorn and a Diet Coke/Dr. Pepper concoction, I took my seat in the second-to-last aisle and waited patiently for the screening to start. The choruses of "Arghs" (as an anti-piracy warning was displayed on screen) were the last sounds heard from the audience before we entered into Zhao's world together.

Throughout the first 30 minutes of the film, I was captivated by the cinematography. Luscious green meadows and an entrancing use of flora and fauna entertained my eyes while period-accurate costumes exemplified the realistic nature of the film. Though I found that the story had a slow start, by the film's midpoint, all of the rising action came to a climax. It was at this point that those around me, as well as I, allowed our tears that had been threatening to come out to do just that. Through the anguished cries of Jessie Buckley as Agnes, the wife of Shakespeare, the audience truly felt the immense emotions that come with motherhood. Buckley becomes unrecognizable through her grief in this role and is a vessel for viewer insertion into the story.

The last 30 minutes of the film bring all elements of artistic expression and family values home through the onstage production of *Hamlet*, as viewers watch alongside Agnes. The production mirrors important aspects of Agnes and William's life together, unbeknownst to the other hundred viewers of the tragedy. Despite their lack of knowledge of the story that inspired the play they watch, audience members on-screen sob and join in with Agnes in the paramount action of the picture. It is through the reactionary response of the Globe's audience members that the messaging of the film becomes clear for audiences: we, too, are sitting here, not personally familiar with the real people the story is based on, yet we cry with them. We feel alongside them, and though we may not be mothers or fathers, we physically express the emotions portrayed by on-screen characters because we, too, are able to feel them. Agnes' grief becomes a universal emotion for viewers both within the film and out, and moves people to understanding.

After the applause passed and the credits rolled over a soft melody, I remained seated. Looking around at these strangers that I had just gone on this immense journey of emotion with, it seemed that they were left with the same feeling of astonishment as me. We had all just played an active role in the film, one as important as any other cast member, and we were not sure where to go from there. It is with reluctance that I stood up, wiped away my tears, and walked out of that theatre. As I passed my co-workers, they noticed that my face was beet red from having cried through two-thirds of the film, and I expressed my praise to the winning picture I'd just had the privilege of seeing. Walking out onto King Street, heading towards the subway home, I listened to Mitski's "Working for the Knife" on repeat. The lyrics "I cry at the start of every movie / I guess 'cause I wish I was making things too" encapsulated my feelings of amazement about the film alongside a self-deprecating belief that I would never be able to create something as movingly brilliant as what I had just seen.

I urge anyone interested in this film to break out of their comfort zone and go see this film alone, in a theatre full of strangers. It too will move you.

Season of the *HOA*HOA*HOA*

Twilight returns to Theatres

Kiersten Herborth

ARTS AND CULTURE

There's a chill in the air, the rain is starting to pour, and the wind has picked up. It's officially the season of the *HOA*HOA*HOA**, and if you haven't heard, all five movies of the *Twilight* saga will be returning to theatres this fall

The *Twilight* films are ones which society has a love-hate relationship with... in that we love to hate them. From the terrible dialogue, to the bad acting, and even to weird vampire baby puppets, we can't help but love to hate them. So "you better hold on tight, spider monkey," and prepare yourself for this in-depth analysis on my and U of T's relationship with *Twilight* before its return to theatres this fall.

I first saw *Twilight* at the ripe age of 10, walking into my older sister's room to find her watching it on her laptop, the aggressive blue tint grabbing my attention. To quote Edward Cullen himself, "everything about me invites you in," and this is seemingly true because every year when the weather starts to get colder and cloudy, I find myself going back to rewatch the entire saga. "As if you could out run me... as if you could fight me off," is exactly what the *Twilight* saga would say to me every fall. It's like *Twilight* is "my own personal brand of heroin." I hate it but I cannot seem to stop myself from coming back to it.

My personal favourite film from the saga is *New Moon* for two main reasons. The first is that the soundtrack includes the likes of some of my favourite artists: Bon Iver, St. Vincent, and even Death Cab for Cutie. It's an indie-folk lover's dream come true, and fully immerses viewers into the wildlife of Forks, Washington. The second reason is that I am (controversially) team Jacob. Taylor Lautner, of *Shark Boy and Lava Girl* fame, portrays Jacob Black, Bella's childhood best friend, and is the third member of the complicated love triangle that is Bella, Edward and Jacob. "Bella, where the hell have you been, loca?" Well, unfortunately not marrying Jacob, but *New Moon* gives us a great glimpse into their friendship, and even teases us with some romantic chemistry. Now, nothing will compare to the chemistry Bella surprisingly has with Carlisle in this film, however, I believe that the relationship Bella has with Jacob feels much more organic than that of her and Edward's.

This is all how I feel about the *Twilight* saga, but I wanted to get an idea as to how the rest of U of T feels about it. Using an anonymous survey I sent out to a number of U of T students, I gathered a fair amount of data about how the U of T community feels about the Twilight Saga and its return to theatres. Here is the information that I collected, alongside the questions which were asked:

What are your thoughts on the Twilight saga?
29.4% of students love the Twilight saga
29.4% of students have not seen the Twilight saga
5.9% of students hate the Twilight saga
35.3% of students wrote other

What is your favourite film from the Twilight saga?
35.3% of students answered that they had not seen any of the Twilight saga films

For the fan favourite film, we had a three way tie, as...
17.6% of students answered Twilight
17.6% of students answered New Moon
17.6% of students answered Breaking Dawn Part 1

while...
5.9% of students answered Eclipse
5.9% of students answered Breaking Dawn Part 2

Will you be seeing the Twilight saga (any of the five films) in theatres this fall?
41.2% of students said no
29.4% of students said yes
29.4% of students said maybe

In one section of the survey, I gave participants the option to expand on their thoughts of the *Twilight* saga. These are a few comments which stood out to me...

"I don't really know what it's about except there's a girl who has like a hoard of vampire lovers? And that Kristen Stewart is in it. The vampires also sparkle."

"I loved Edward in the first movie but after watching *New Moon* I LOVEDDD jacob. had to rethink my life a little"

"I've always wanted to see it, and when I did, I wish I never did – worth it"

"I have yet to watch any of the movies, but I was gifted all of the *Twilight* DVDs by my (now ex-) best friend's (now ex-) boyfriend despite our mutual dislike of each other, which I feel captures this franchise's power to bring together even the worst of enemies. I'd also like to note that their breakup and our friendship fallout occurred shortly after the gifting of the DVDs so whether or not *Twilight* was also the cause of those is up for you to decide."

With this data, I was pleasantly surprised to learn how many U of T students have in fact seen and taken interest in the *Twilight* saga, and how many might be seeing it in theatres again this fall. I personally will definitely be seeing *New Moon* in theatres, and if I have the time, may even see the entire saga. Hopefully I will see you all there as well!

TIFF Review – *Good News*

Vince Woodford

CAPSULE MOVIE REVIEW

Byun Sung-hyun's *Good News* is a South Korean action comedy about the chaos that comes after a group of young radicals hijacks a Japanese flight at a Korean airport, demanding that their flight be rerouted to Pyongyang. What follows is a comedy of errors as the flight crew, American military, Japanese government, and Korean intelligence agencies struggle to keep the situation under control.

The first hour of this film was genuinely one of my favourite theatre experiences of the festival. The visuals were eye-catching, the dialogue was witty and hilarious, and while the sound mixing was slightly off, I felt that I was in for a great viewing experience. However, by the second hour of the film, I was wondering if the film really needed nearly 140 minutes to tell its story.

Performance-wise, this film is firing on all cylinders, and the comedic timing was electric between all of the ensemble cast. The political satire was effective and hilarious, even to someone who isn't incredibly familiar with the political context from which it arose. Everyone on all sides was made fun of: bumbling military and government officials, radicals who don't entirely know what they're doing, and actors whose egos are much bigger than their talents. There were some recurring bits that had me chuckling every time they were mentioned, and the film overall had a grounded sense of comedy.

I do feel that the film's comedy was hurt by its bloat. There was a lot that needed to be left on the cutting room floor—not to say that the extra content was bad, just that there was too much of it. The phrase "kill your darlings" is really salient for cases like this: sometimes you need to cut your third-best joke in order to keep your second and first. A lot of scenes could have benefited from some general tightening or from shaving off an extra few seconds per shot.

The style is fresh and vibrant. Sung-hyun has a great eye for dynamic shots and scene transitions. However, I feel like the film was also a bit overproduced. The dynamic shots would have had more of an effect if they were used a bit more sparingly because they aren't as impactful as they should have been, given their technical skill. Also, having a bit of a "quieter" style would help to foreground the incredible acting and scriptwork.

Overall, this is a fun movie despite its slightly unjustified runtime. I hope Netflix does give this film a theatrical release, both in South Korea and globally, because it should be seen on the big screen (and I don't think a lot of people will finish the film if they have the option to turn it off). I also look forward to seeing what Sung-hyun does in the future. I think that once he starts working with his editor and hones his style, he will create some really fun films.

The Trio / Il Triello—The Greatest Standoff in Cinema

Ario Shakarami

CAPSULE MOVIE REVIEW

I watch a lot of movies. I love movies. But every once in a while, you watch a movie that you know is going to be an absolute blast. The reputations precede the quality, and sometimes, they even match it. The best experience is watching a film with a good reputation that has a quality that is ten times more powerful than anything people say about it.

That's how I feel about *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* (1966), directed by the legendary Sergio Leone, and starring Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef, and Eli Wallach. I love the entire *Dollars* Trilogy, which includes *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) and *For A Few Dollars More* (1965)—hard to believe he made three masterpieces in a three-year period! But those two masterpieces culminate in the nearly three-hour epitome of spaghetti Westerns, which capped off this trilogy in the most masterful way in cinema. Directors like Quentin Tarantino consider this the only real masterpiece trilogy that didn't fall off after the second film, and I have to agree. Up there with the *Lord of the Rings* and *Toy Story* trilogies, these three films knock every other film trilogy out of the park, delivering solid performances, killer Morricone soundtracks, stellar cinematography, and captivating gun-slinging action plots that keep you engaged for hours.

I think the culmination of this culmination comes in the climax of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, commonly referred to as "The Trio," a three-way Mexican standoff, layered with the most intense Ennio Morricone track known to man, and visually presenting nothing other than three men staring back and forth at each other for five minutes straight. What should be the most boring scene ever is so masterfully shot and edited that it delivers the most intense and suspenseful final duel ever shot on film.

Let's rewind back a bit. The scene starts with Tuco—the Ugly—desperately digging Arch Stanton's grave with his hands, in the hopes of finding the treasure that the whole film has revolved around finding. The Man with No Name, Blondie, The Good, whatever you want to call him, shows up, his iconic waa waa waaaaaa stinger introducing him as he throws Tuco a shovel. "It'll be a lot easier with that," he taunts. Tuco begrudgingly starts digging, one hand on his gun holster. Out of nowhere, another shovel is thrown. Angel Eyes enters the scene. The Bad! Apparently, horses in the Civil War could gallop with zero sound emitted. These two basically teleport in, scaring the others with their entrances! "Two can dig a lot quicker than one. Dig," Angel Eyes says. Does he know who he's talking to? Each time Clint Eastwood bites his tobacco cigar, an angel loses its wings! Who does Lee Van Cleef think he's bossing around? Blondie lights a match and continues smoking his cheroot. Angel Eyes cocks his gun. Tuco grimaces. Blondie continues smoking stoically. "If you shoot me, you won't see a cent of that money." He kicks up the coffin and reveals the skeleton inside. Here lies Arch Stanton. Tuco pays his respects. In real life, that skeleton was set decorator Carlo Leva's real mother's remains, who had been an actress, and was left as a "skeleton for hire." Some actors just can't get enough spotlight, apparently.

So what happened to the money? The $200,000? A lot of money in the 1860s, I bet. Blondie remains one step ahead of Angel Eyes and Tuco the entire scene, controlling them without even holding his gun. His weapon is his mind, which holds the secret that they all want access to. Wearing his iconic brown and earth-toned poncho, Blondie walks into the center of the cemetery to a large stone-laden centerpiece. He picks up a rock, writes something underneath it, and places it in the middle. That's it. The prize. The prize that the whole movie has been leading up to. Two and a half hours of traveling, killing, surviving, just to be so close to this treasure. Why doesn't Blondie just kill them both and keep the treasure? Because he's the Good. He is cool, calculated, stoic, and honorable.

And so, the Ennio Morricone track comes in. How beautiful this piece of music is. How many times I've done PRs in the gym to this song! What's about to happen next becomes apparent. A three-way final duel, the only way to end a three-part trilogy; the climax to this unholy trinity. They slowly begin to form a triangle, each taking a corner in the huge rock-laden circle amid the beautiful Sad Hill Cemetery, shot in the vast plains of Spain. As the blaring trumpet theme erupts through the screen, we cut to an extreme wide shot, showing us everything from a bird's eye view. They each take their corner. Tuco on the left, Angel Eyes in the middle, Blondie on the right. The harsh musical triads erupting from the trumpet perfectly mirror the three of them standing off in sharp opposition, waiting for the right moment to shoot.

The masterful Sergio Leone introduces the fight with this climactic cornet theme, then cuts it off in an instant, as we hear nothing but birds cawing and wind blowing. Complete contrast. Masterful. We get a cowboy shot of each of them, as they eye up both of their opponents. A shot of each of their waists, guns strapped and ready to go. A medium close-up on each face, stoic and waiting to strike. Then, a close-up. We see their internal battles. Tuco, wide-eyed and frantic. Angel Eyes, cunning and calculated. Blondie, stoic and confident.

Then... the trumpet returns, triumphantly raising your adrenaline and pumping the scene back into full gear. Something is about to happen! Someone is about to die. Are you on the edge of your seat yet? For a full MINUTE, we see back-and-forth shots of their faces, eyes frantically jumping back and forth, calculating their next move, hands on their guns, standing off in pure menace. The music crescendos, the tempo rises, the shots get tighter, the suspense is at an all-time peak, AAAAANNNNNNDDDDDDD... in one second, six shots are edited, as the climactic duel ends with Blondie shooting Angel Eyes, and knocking him down. Hoooolyyyy crap, dude. Tuco's gun doesn't work... typical. It is clear that Angel Eyes and Blondie both had it out for each other, recognizing the mutual threat. Tuco likely went for Angel Eyes too, so he stood no chance. In a tight shot depicting desperate malevolence, Angel Eyes gets ready to shoot Blondie, but is finished with a second shot. He is literally thrown into an empty grave. How fitting. And a third shot to confirm the kill.

I won't spoil what happens next as the film comes to a close between our favorite duo, Eastwood and Wallach, but with the Bad out of the picture, this intense climax comes to a close, and the Trio soundtrack fades out as the shots of Angel Eyes' death ring out. I can't imagine this scene without Ennio Morricone's fantastic soundtrack, which, as I explained, really completes these films. Without Morricone's soundtrack in all three of these films, I can't imagine they would be as popular and timeless as they are. There's nothing else quite like the Sergio Leone and Ennio Morricone duo in cinema. The Trio is a masterclass in filmmaking, showing that a simple scene cutting between three characters for 5 minutes can be a masterpiece if you apply the right techniques and hone down all the elements that make it so great. I can't think of a more exciting, satisfying, well-edited, audibly exhilarating, and well-performed scene in any film in the history of cinema. Can you?

Midnight Madness Recap with Peter Kuplowsky

The man with the hat reveals his secrets

Burak Batu Tunçel

INTERVIEW

Midnight is a special time. It is when most people are tucked in their beds, drifting off to the realm of dreams. In a way, Midnight Madness programmer Peter Kuplowsky is some sort of sandman – but he brings the dreams to you at King Street's iconic Royal Alexandra Theatre when the clock hits midnight at the annual Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

Even though these dreams are sometimes nightmares, Kuplowsky keeps his selection of midnight movies quite diverse. From bone-shaking action to norm-breaking comedies, every night is a different adventure at the 10 days of Midnight Madness (MM).

We had a chance to chat about his approach to programming with the mad-hatter himself as he zoomed in from the set of a production he's currently working on.

This interview has been edited for clarity and conciseness.

———

Batu: What was your overall impression of Midnight Madness this year?

Peter Kuplowsky: I thought the vibes were pretty great. From the audience perspective, every night, people were having right-out fun. There was a really great energy and camaraderie amongst the audience members – but also amongst the audience and a lot of the film teams. It's rare to see the cast spill out into the street – it happens occasionally, mostly for smaller movies – but it happened a bunch of times, and I think that was just a testament to how much the filmmakers really loved the audience and wanted to connect with them.

B: There was a really diverse range of films this year, from topics to genres.

PK: Every year, I really try to inject a diverse range of films in some way. I have a lot of different films that have opened in different parts of the world, and sometimes I achieve this [range] through [the films of] people coming from distinct cultural backgrounds, or genders, or world views, or genres. If I'm self-critical, I wish I had more international stuff in the selection. But, at the same time, I'm really happy that there was such a variety of genres. Every night was operating [as] a very distinct experience, and even though I had a lot of comedies, I found that the comedies were all very different permutations of them.

B: Exactly, this year did have a lot of cross-genre stuff.

PK: Yeah. What emboldened me to feature a lot of comedies in this year's edition was how well Tim Robinson and Andrew DeYoung's Friendship went over last year. To me, it suggested a strong interest in alternative comedy – and that all-comedy works could work in the section.

And to be honest, there were films that ended up in other sections at the festival that might have played Midnight Madness. Films like *Maddie's Secret*, for instance, also have a strong alternative comedy component – or *Exit 8*, which I think is a really strong genre film. In those cases, though, I felt that those films could be served in a better section. Sometimes, it is about setting expectations or calibrating expectations correctly, because I just find that the Midnight audience has such a specific energy. So I tried to find films that could generate interesting reactions.

B: What would you say is the line between an MM film and a non-MM film?

PK: *laughs* My stock answer for the last few years has been that a genre film checks boxes, a midnight film adds boxes that you didn't know existed before!

It pushes the needle in some way. Expanding on that a little bit, I've also looked at midnight films on a spectrum. *Where The Evil Dead* is on one side, *Eraserhead* is on the other. You can have a slower film that can work at Midnight, then you can have something that's more high-octane and kinetic as well. So, it's not always about momentum, but I do think – for me – what makes a midnight film is that every step of the way, it is blocking convention. It is doing something different, or it is simply entertaining. It's either entertaining or provoking: It's doing something with a rhythm, or it cruises a sort of frequency of provocation or spectacle.

B: Before you did Midnight Madness, you were a member of the Cinema Studies Student Union (CINSSU) at U of T, and you programmed for the WTF Wednesday series.

PK: Yeah, WTF Wednesday was initially founded by my good friend Eastern Yu, and then I started working on it with him. Definitely, I would credit Eastern for the idea of that. For the series, we were just like, "Let's go to Room 222 and show some of the strangest stuff we can find!"

This might be too much information, but I remember that one of the first editions we did, I had rented a 16mm print of *The Green Slime*, the Kinji Fukasaku film, and then, unfortunately, it landed on the exact same day that CINSSU was invited into a special sneak preview screening of a work-in-progress version of Zack Snyder's *300*. It was not the whole movie – like a 40-minute cut of it. They weren't showing the whole film, but a selection of scenes that took you through the movie in an accelerated way. Snyder was gonna be there, and literally every CINSSU member said, "We're gonna go to that instead," so I had to stay behind and host the screening of *The Green Slime* while everybody was at this event.

It was like when Bart would go to Itchy and Scratchy the Movie in *The Simpsons*. And I remember coming back to the office when everyone had returned from 300. I was like, "How was it?" and everybody was immediately like, "Oh, it was unbelievable!!! The greatest thing ever!!" And I remember when I saw the final movie, they were like, "Man, the version we saw at that screening was better than the movie because it was only 40 minutes – just the good stuff!" *laughter*

B: What has become different from when you were doing screenings for CINSSU and now for Midnight Madness?

PK: When we were programming for CINSSU, it was always a group discussion – and I miss how spirited those discussions would be. We would really argue about what we want to play, and sometimes the argument would be like: "That show has played in Toronto recently!" or "This show never plays in Toronto!"

There was like a point someone wanted to make because I wanna introduce the film in a certain way or create a double bill – we're gonna juxtapose movies.

Trying to remember some of the memorable double bills we did... One was *Full Metal Jacket* and *Eyes Wide Shut*. Another good one was *Mysterious Skin* and *Heavenly Creatures*.

The thing I miss the most – and now I'm so appreciative of that time – is that there were so many 35mm prints still available from all the major studios. They kept pretty accessible archives. It was just so exciting to book all this stuff on film and not have it be a big detective story where you had to go and track down a print from a private collector. Most of the major studios and their affiliates in Canada had huge archives of 35s, and I feel like we were one of the last eras to have that access to prints – to me, that was so special.

Midnight is a different beast. It's something I largely do on my own. One of the things I really relish about working in TIFF is that they give programmers a lot of autonomy. I very rarely have to vent my lineup with my superiors: they might wanna play something, I wanna play something, and that's how it goes.

The challenge becomes that I wanna show stuff I'm interested in and stuff the audience will be interested in. I wanna show stuff the industry will be interested in. I feel especially since the festival finally established a film market, I wanna have a slate that feels like it's gonna be showcasing new titles that are looking for buyers, so that it becomes an exciting sales market.

But I also want to respect the alumni who are submitting their films. I played a Ben Wheatley film because I knew that the audience likes Ben Wheatley. He won a People's Choice Award last time he was here, so I knew there was an interest in that film. *Dust Bunny* as well – it's a film that had Sigourney Weaver attending Midnight Madness. So, it's always fun to have a big celebrity component to one or two of the screenings because that's gonna help anchor in bringing new audiences. You have a great time at that screening, and maybe you'll decide to come to other screenings to see what they're like.

B: On that, do you think midnight movies themselves have become a market?

PK: Absolutely. When midnight movies started, it was an exhibitor concept trying to cultivate a new audience during a period of business that wasn't doing very well. They were like: "What if we keep the theater open at midnight? There are all these weirdos who would want to come and watch. We can play movies for them." So they started out with *El Topo*, Kenneth Anger films, and eventually, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

Shortly after that, festivals started to include midnight sections. Toronto International Film Festival is one of the first to have a dedicated midnight section. I think in many ways it was responsible for institutionalizing the concept of a midnight cinema. And then, before long, the genre films that were premiering in that section began to be very commercially buyable, and now, genre films and horror films have really become a big A-genre. Horror has always been profitable, but there's definitely a strong interest on a studio level in producing more horror films because the audience loves to come out for them.

But it's interesting because midnight sections inherently have towed the line between genre and something that's a bit more experimental, a little more confrontational. I think that's part of the balancing when I put together a lineup. I want to find films that I think will be crowd-pleasers, and I want to find the films that I think are gonna be divisive and provocative. Even when I schedule it out, I want to start with films that are a bit more unifying and popular – then I introduce stuff that is more divisive and polarizing.

B: Speaking of the order in which you show the films this year. Did you have any concerns about putting *Normal* after *The Furious*? Because the latter sets the bar too high on the action.

PK: **laughs** It's funny, in scheduling, some of it is based on what I'm interested in and simply trying to create a flow. Sometimes it's also logistical: when are the filmmakers available, when are the talent available? *Dust Bunny* on Monday was largely due to factors in terms of Sigourney's availability. That can sometimes supersede creating a sense of flow towards things.

I wanted *The Furious* in a prime spot. I wanted *The Furious* also because it's a movie that will bring this huge cast. It really felt like a culmination of the Midnight Madness section because it contained so many actors who got their start in the program. So many technicians and artisans. Even XYZ is a major selling company. They had a long history in MM, and I wanted to put them in a significant spot in the festival.

Normal's action is a very different kind of action. I felt it skewed more towards comedy. I felt that we were going to slide towards a more comedic action approach, because I think *Dust Bunny* [which played the following night] was very whimsical and funny, too. So, therefore, I felt this would be a transition into something like *Dust Bunny* after the high extremes of *The Furious*.

But you're right. Last year, *The Shadow Strays* ended up being on the last day, and that was largely due to the fact that Timo Tjahjanto was shooting *Nobody 2*, and he was not available until the final weekend! We really wanted to make that happen. It was also not a sales title. It was bought by Netflix, so I didn't try to position it for the big sales.

B: Here's a confrontational question. One of my favorite moments of the festival was when someone yelled, "What the fuck Peterrr!" from the balcony during *Fuck My Son!*. To what extent do you feel responsible for the movies you show?

PK: I consider myself responsible for all of it. I do encourage people to read my program notes, which I really labor over. I spend like 2 or 3 days on each note, really trying to write something that articulates why I included the film and setting up what to expect without spoiling the story.

Chuckles

So, I was surprised by the amount of people who walked out of *Fuck My Son!* and were surprised at what was in that movie. I feel like I said everything that was in that in the program notes. It's all there; you shouldn't be surprised. If anybody ever has any familiarity with the works of John Waters and trash cinema like *Nothing But Trouble* or a *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* film, I feel like aesthetically and tonally, there are a lot of similarities between those films.

I even warned people of the use of AI in the movie – which I would defend as this is a movie that intentionally assembles a collage of trash aesthetics. I think it's impossible to deny that generative AI is a hyper-contemporary trash aesthetic that exists in our world – and the fact that the movie uses that technology during the satirical corporate videos is literally saying, 'This is how corporations are presenting the moviegoing experience.' I don't think it's entirely inaccurate; a lot of these corporations are using generative AI for their pre-shows.

And then, the other significant use of it is when a young girl starts hallucinating apparitions of the YouTube characters she follows. Unfortunately, I think a lot of children's entertainment is beginning to be artificially generated – especially on YouTube.

I completely respect anyone who draws a hard line. Certainly, the filmmakers could have pursued handmade approaches to those specific elements in the film. But I do think it was part of an aesthetic project that the filmmaker was doing, and I think it would be wrong to privilege all those effects and ignore all the incredible handmade stuff that's in the rest of the film: the incredible work Marcia King and Robert Kurtzman did on the prosthetic.

And the performances... I personally think they are terrific camp performances. I think Robert Longstreet's amazing in the film, and Tipper Newton is a miracle! I write about it in my program notes that she walks this wild tight rope that is almost like a female Bruce Campbell performance. It's really funny.

B: Building off of AI, I felt like a lot of Midnight Madness films this year were concerned with the internet and social media in some way. I have been noticing some sort of internet brainrot cinema coming into shape in general-

PK: Terminally online cinema?

B: Yeah! How do you think this kind of film will manifest itself in the future?

PK: Well, I'm still waiting for a festival to start playing TikToks. Like a movie you just watch in a loop, multiple times.

I mean, it's beginning to happen, the new wave of liminal horror films, like *Skinamarink*, speak to this kind of terminally online cinema. We're gonna get a Skibidi Toilet movie, aren't we?

B: Yeah, by Michael Bay!

PK: Haha, apparently it exists – currently being developed.

I'm trying to think about my lineup with respect to social media. A film like *The Napa Boys* absolutely is a movie with a meta component to it. One of the ways to fully enjoy it is to acknowledge the meta elements of the all-comedian personas that are in the film and what they are doing both on-screen and off-screen; and how they discuss the film and how they represent the film.

I'm trying to think about how it factors in the other films. A movie like *Obsession* is by a YouTube creator – so there's a component there. He made a very classical horror movie. I don't think it necessarily speaks to any contemporary social media aesthetics. Though I suppose you could say that the film maybe was inspired by the Overly Obsessed Girlfriend meme!

Laughter

B: *Karmadonna* was actually on my mind.

PK: Well, *Karmadonna* is full of angry rhetoric towards social media culture and the contemporary cultural mysteries that we, the filmmaker and the characters in the film, take offense at, from toxic influencers to media producers who are exploiting their forces. In the case of *Karmadonna*, one of them is really the son of God.

The more I talk it through, I do appreciate the throughline. I don't think it was necessarily conscious – it wasn't like I really wanna combine a bunch of movies that are speaking to internet culture.

At a certain point, I really did appreciate how many comedies I was playing, and I decided to lean in that direction because I was interested in how each comedy was coming at it in a very distinct way. Both *Nirvanna (The Band The Show The Movie)* and *The Napa Boys* are very anarchic but very much indebted to their love of cinema and cinema conventions. But they approach the expression of that in a very distinct way.

B: And I thought it was very fitting to open and end the program with local films [*Nirvanna* and *Dead Lover*].

PK: I love that! Once I saw *Dead Lover* and *Nirvanna* – and loved both of them – that's when I began to think it would be really cool to bookend the section with these two movies that are pretty Canadian films that are not launching in the festival but rather have developed cult followings internationally and are now coming home for their Canadian premieres.

I think that demonstrates that we're in a real exciting period for English language Canadian filmmaking. There are some really strong voices that are making very idiosyncratic and interesting cult films, which are performing on an international level.

I also love that we ended our program with not just a local film, but a film that fully embraced the midnight movie experience in the tradition of exhibitors who did midnight movies also by having the Stink-o-Vision scratch-n-sniff parts. I think that was such an awesome interactive element that further advanced the screening.

It's funny too when you juxtapose it with *Nirvanna*, which also had interactive elements to the screening that had surprise cast members in the audience and the RV from the movie pulling up at the corner of the theater. So, a lot of these midnight movies do try to engage with these meta extra-curricular activities.

But also, I like how *Nirvanna* is also super hyper-contemporary given its aesthetic and *Dead Lover* harkens back to the aesthetics of the original Midnight Movies – like a cult genre movie they made in the 20s and 30s, with one of the most primordial midnight stories which is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* – which has been reinvented time and time again, including at the festival with Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein*, but certainly also in a lot of midnight contexts like *Frankenhooker* or *Reanimator*. It was really cool to bookend with. I liked the symmetry of that. But I can't say all this stuff is planned in advance; some of this, you just feel it out when you're assembling.

B: And people love your intros too! People still talk about *The Substance*'s workout bit. I think the song you sang before *Dead Love* will be spoken about for the next couple of years.

PK: Oh, I'm so glad. I'm such a theatre ham, and now that Midnight Madness has gone to technically Toronto's equivalent of the Broadway stage [Royal Alexandra Theatre], I always want to get up and sing. I'm glad it's appreciated.

When I do those intros, one of the reasons I do the hat toss is that I know I miss most times, and I like the idea of failing in front of everybody – it makes me more of a jester and a fool. And I think it puts the filmmakers at ease because sometimes they are nervous about going outside – but if they see I just slipped up and did something silly on stage, I think it reduces the stakes for them. It makes them go, "It's not super severe or doesn't have to be super serious, and if anyone's gonna embarrass themselves on stage, it's Peter. It's not gonna be me."

And I try to bring a lot of energy because I recognize there are people in the audience who have seen more movies that day. I recognize that it's late and that people watch midnight movies a lot less. It's less of an exhibition concept in regular movie theatres. So, I think it is rare for people to stay up late and start watching movies at midnight, and I think people, with variations, tend to get tired a whole lot quicker, so I'm really like, 'How can I captivate this audience? How can I really hype them up, so when the movie starts, they are at the most frenzied they can be, so there is no risk of them nodding off too soon?'

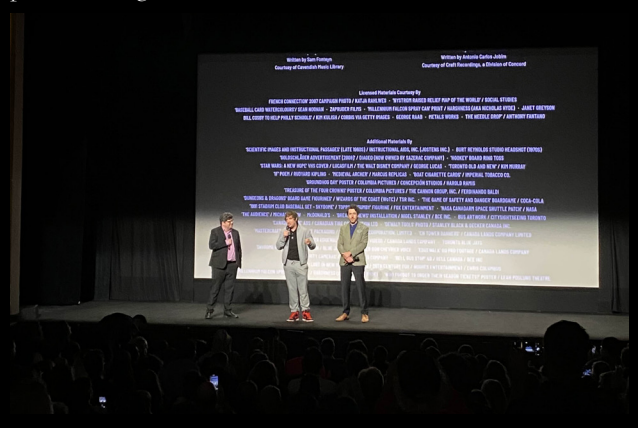
B: Thank you so much for speaking to us, Peter. Is there anything you would want to say to the *Herald* readers?

PK: My brother used to run *The Innis Herald*.

B: Really?!

PK: Yeah, so the *Herald* is very dear to me. I remember he dedicated an entire issue to our now-deceased cat. So, I fondly think of the *Innis Herald*, and it was always a great friend to CINSSU – they were next to each other. It's an honor and privilege to be interviewed by the *Herald*, so thank you for the opportunity.

B: Well, thank you for taking your time. Hope the movie production goes well!



Living As A Monster 101: by Yoshiki and "Hikaru"

Keira Chen

ARTS AND CULTURE

Hello, readers of the Herald. Do you read manga? No? Well, it is my humble duty to try to change that. (You may have even heard of this up-and-coming piece of media, with its recent adaptation to an anime on Netflix.) I present to you: 'The Summer Hikaru Died,' by Mokumokuren.

As the chilling season of Halloween nears, I hope to recommend an equally horrifying piece of fiction. 'The Summer Hikaru Died (TSHD)' is a supernatural/psychological horror manga, exploring themes of death, grief, humanity, (queer) identity, and acceptance. This story is centered around Yoshiki and Hikaru — two schoolboys, best friends — as they live their day-to-day lives in their small, rural hometown. It is the summer when Yoshiki finally comes to the haunting realization that something is wrong. Hikaru, since disappearing in the mountains six months ago, has been acting... different. He looks the same and sounds the same, but his mannerisms are somehow more carefree, and he speaks with an uncharacteristic curiosity.

All noise quiets, and under the pressure of a sweltering summer sun, Yoshiki confronts Hikaru.

"You ain't the real Hikaru, are ya?"

This manga puts a new spin on the classic "came back wrong" trope, as we learn that Hikaru is, in fact, no longer Hikaru, and is instead inhabited by some eldritch monster who possesses Hikaru's body and mind. Despite lacking any semblance of humanity, Not-Hikaru tries his absolute darnedest to do whatever it takes to remain by Yoshiki's side, even if that means killing other residents of their town, or learning empathy and the value of human life.

And that's just the beginning! School starts. Everything is the same, and yet, nothing will ever be the same again. New characters, old friends, are introduced. Not-Hikaru's presence in the town starts attracting malevolent creatures and spirits, and soon, Yoshiki and Not-Hikaru won't be the only ones affected by the supernatural. You will watch as it gets harder and harder for Not-Hikaru (and Yoshiki?) to conceal their monstrous self.

With that being said, there's nothing I love more than internal conflict. If you love watching/reading characters fight their own mind and/or heart, writhe as a result of their own actions, struggle to acknowledge themself, then this truly is the manga for you. This is relevant, though, because Hikaru (and Yoshiki?) is burdened with the weight of hiding his identity, hiding the fact that he is, indeed, a monster. He struggles to fit into society, appearances aside, mentally and as a person, as a human. How can he be like everyone else? How can he fit in if he is simply internally different? How could he ever be accepted if there is something fundamentally wrong with him?

'TSHD' truly explores what it means to be human, and what it means to be a monster. Are you a monster because you are an incomprehensible, horrifying eldritch being from the mountains possessing the body of a schoolboy? Are you a monster because you have no concept of morality or empathy? Are you a monster because you simply are wrong, existing incorrectly, evilly? Are you a monster because you are hiding that evil? Are you a monster because you are hiding something, something no one in your small town could ever understand or accept, but something you cannot change? Is Not-Hikaru truly a monster? Is Yoshiki? There's only one way to find out the truth about these boys (go read the manga!!), and what you discover might be less horrifying than you think.

'TSHD' is one of the most compelling pieces I have ever read. (I really must credit my friend who put me on. Ian Kim, this goes out to you.) Since I read it about a year ago, I have been absolutely obsessed. I am on the path to owning all the current printed volumes (I unfortunately only have two), I have cosplays planned for the characters, I've drawn fanart of these guys, my phone and laptop background are manga panels — I love 'TDSH.'

Readers and future readers of this manga: hit me up. Let's talk and bond over this peak media.

TLDR: technically a BL manga (hey, if that's what makes you read it, then I will do what it takes), amazing art and art style, queer themes, horror aspects, black/white haired duo, one of my favourite pieces of literature, is on Netflix if you don't want to read.

How to Keep Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Vistus Vajedsamiei

FEATURE

Nowadays, there is no denying the ubiquity of artificial intelligence. Ironically, as soon as I turned on my laptop to start writing this piece, Microsoft suggested that I use its artificial intelligence tool, Copilot. When most people discuss artificial intelligence, or AI, they are typically referring to large language models (LLMs) or generative AI such as ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot. Given their immense capabilities for producing what might be considered near-human abilities to write and speak, their growing popularity comes as no surprise. One population among whom AI use is increasingly popular is students. Academically, students tend to use it for a few different purposes: to help them complete work, summarize course readings, write emails, aid their understanding of class material by asking the AI questions, and to study for assessments.

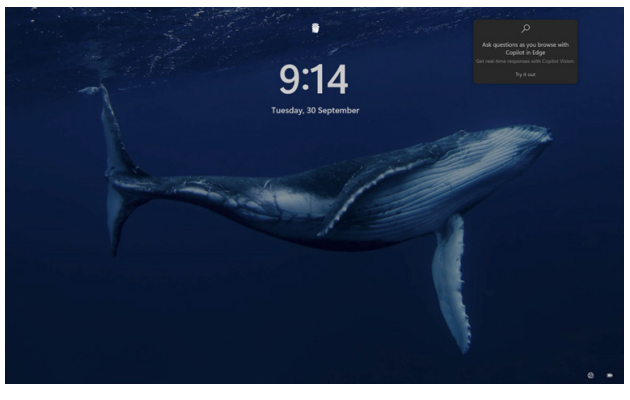
This is a problem for several reasons. The first is that LLMs are prone to hallucinating or fabricating information and sources of information by design. They are designed to mimic human patterns of writing and speech, rather than checking information and sources for validity or factuality. Additionally, they typically plagiarize from the work of real human authors, often without properly citing the human-made work they found the information in. These are all reasons we have come to expect professors to use on their syllabi as to why they are banning, or at least, restricting AI use in their courses.

There are other reasons as well, such as the exploitative and environmentally-destructive aspects of AI use. But for our purposes, we will be focusing on what I believe to be the most glaring issues with AI use in academia: that it is killing our human creativity and disrupting our natural, human ways of learning, which involve overcoming challenges, taking time to look for answers, making mistakes, and working with other humans.

AI kills our human creativity by replacing it with stolen creativity from other humans. We no longer use our own bodies and minds to create works, be they writing, music, or visual art. Since we are no longer as involved in the creation process, we do not encounter as many challenges or make as many mistakes, so we are not inclined to learn from them. Any mistakes or challenges come from the AI's own flaws, and not the human ones that eventually help us to learn for ourselves. Generative AIs also tend to give us quick answers to questions, drawing us away from the difficult, long, and tedious research process to arrive at data and arrive at conclusions ourselves, thus leaving our critical thinking and research skills underdeveloped. Put simply, AI use is making us less intelligent, less patient, more afraid of making mistakes, and less confident in our abilities to overcome obstacles.

Given all these detrimental effects, we urgently need to find solutions. One solution has emerged in the form of professors' bans or restrictions on AI use in academic settings. Another solution is the use of AI checker services, like Turnitin. A third has come in the form of increased exams. However, the insufficiency, inaccuracy, and the lack of clear guidelines around these leave us seeking better solutions.

I believe that with a little self-control and discipline, students hold the key to eliminating their own AI use in academics. Begin by thinking about all the negative impacts of AI use, like the ones I mentioned here. It's likely that your moral compass wants you to be good, and so it will point away from AI based on the drawbacks that I just mentioned. Now, to make sure that we stay on this AI-free path, I ask that you block all generative AI tools using screentime management apps or tools on your devices. I set mine to have an impossibly long password that I'll be too lazy to type. If you need some extra help with learning skills, I highly recommend reaching out to a learning strategist at your college or at the Centre for Learning Strategy Support at U of T. They can help you improve your learning skills, time management, and reduce procrastination, among other things. I also suggest reaching out to your instructors and teaching assistants to answer course-related questions or if you need support, such as extensions to complete an assignment. Lastly, please encourage others to do the same.


9:14
Tuesday, 30 September
Ask questions as you browse with Copilot in Edge
Get real-time responses with Copilot Vision.
Try it out

Remember, the key takeaway here is this: have faith in yourself and your own abilities to excel without relying on some machine. You've got this!

Poetry

layers

i build scaffolds around the softest parts of me,
fastening them to the cartilage of my essence.

as the cocoon loosens, i become the rumor of myself
lattice of habits,
a marrow of my wanting.
shedding, like dried petals after bloom.
releasing the larva of my day and letting it climb my
throat.

i am chrysalis and creature at once.
selecting skin from the wardrobe,
metamorphosed caricature

- PETRA AMON

The Tower

A bright red stains the horizon, leaking into the paling sky.
The sun is a runny yolk sinking behind a lone peak that towers over everything in sight.
The Tower pulses awake, a beacon for lost travellers,
A warning for those who venture too close.

A heavy rumble rolls whence the clouds gather,
And with it; arrival of The Tempest.
The language of mountains is rain,
A voice of caution and a call to few.
The Tower launches into a torrent
Berating any and all at the first sign of weakness.

I close my eyes and rest my head against the railing,
giddy with anticipation.
A few quick, short breaths, and then the darkness will soon arrive...
And then, the rain will stop.
There is the hesitant waiting,
And the moisture in the air that is clinging to my skin
With an awkwardly discomfiting possessiveness.

I open my eyes and lean over,
The waves are reaching up and they want,
I look back and everything is stretching out.
It threatens to overwhelm my sensibilities.

A pallid glow leaks from the horizon.
The sun is a runny yolk sinking behind the sky.
The Tower pulses once more, a beacon for lost travellers,
A warning for those who venture too close.

- SIMBARASHE MUTIKA

The Blank Space of my Being

Parmida Cheraghi Zanjani

PERSONAL

The only thing decorating the blank wall was an incomplete puzzle. What an odd choice of decor, I thought. Where were the rest of the pieces? Was it ever meant to be completed at all? What if the picture was incomplete from the beginning? What if we search our whole lives to complete and find ourselves, only to understand there was always meant to be a missing piece – that there was never a right answer nor a perfect fit? Why are we then looking to find a final answer to the question of our being?

I proceeded to look down at the ground beneath the puzzle, where I found a few pieces lying around. Upon closer inspection of one of them, I added the piece to a section of the left side of the puzzle. In the blink of an eye, the hues of color morphed to form a new picture; it was as if each piece was alive and had a mind of its own, but nevertheless closely connected to the whole. The added piece changed the vision with which I saw the world; it changed the person I was. We stumble upon these pieces in our day-to-day lives: the simple and heart-warming interactions we have with strangers that change how we think, and the very experiences where life teaches us something new. That piece, seemingly insignificant, changes the interactions between the different parts of our being, allowing us to change.

The more I stared at the picture, the more I felt like the piece in the middle no longer belonged to what the puzzle had become, as if it were part of the past, but no longer part of the future and what the puzzle was becoming. I felt guilty removing the piece, but by doing so, I allowed more space to open up for what life had to offer me as I went on with my journey. Was what the puzzle used to be wrong? No. The box that the puzzle came with was as blank as a white canvas, ready to be painted with the imagination of the person. The puzzle never had a definite form but rather endless possibilities, ready to be discovered through the collection of pieces found in our lives.

Would you have spent as much time looking at the puzzle if it were complete, if you were sure that was all there was to it? Would you have taken the time to imagine what the missing space could hold? Or would you have gotten bored with it after a while and taken it off the wall to replace it with something else? The adventure, self-reflection, and self-actualization are what give value to the puzzle. The changing picture is what pulls us in and allows us to see the beauty in not knowing. We are ever-changing, and that is the nature of us as humans; that is what makes us unique. Those who haven't figured out that the puzzle of their being is incomplete still haven't opened their eyes to the puzzle in front of them.

Oak House Residence Opening Delay

Marty Hewitt

STUDENT LIFE

The University of Toronto has recently finished construction of the Oak House student residence right near Innis College, located at the corner of Spadina and Sussex Avenue. The residence is a tall, narrow tower with red brick walls and a historical facade incorporated into the lower floors. Unfortunately, as it seems to go with all the construction we try to get done in this city, Oak House encountered some troubles along the way.

Preparation of the site began after the design was finalized in 2021, with excavation of the tower's foundation completed in spring of 2022 and tower construction well underway by spring of 2023. The project was initially planned to be completed for the 2024 fall term, but this was delayed by one year due to construction progress. The target date of September 2025 was set.

I happen to live right next to the site and saw the construction proceed over summer of this year. While most of the structure came to be finished in good time, the metal fences around the construction site stayed conspicuously late into the month of August, and the interior appeared empty on the lower floors. While this was going on, incoming students were assigned dorms and prepared for a move-in on August 23, 2025. Unfortunately, it went the way of the Eglinton. The day before the planned move-in, students were informed that the residence had failed a last minute inspection, and that the move-in was to be pushed back an indeterminate amount of time. Students were soon told that the move-in would be delayed two weeks, until the weekend after the first week of classes. During this time, students were offered a partial compensation if they were able to postpone their move-in, or temporary lodging at CampusOne or Parkside residences. Fortunately, there were no more delays, and students were able to move in for early September. For more details on this, I would recommend an article from the September 9 2025 issue of *The Varsity*, "Students move into new Oak House residence after two-week delay," which contains a statement from the university and from some of the students during move-in.

My main goal in writing this article was to inform more people that this had all gone on after I had learned that most folks didn't know about the new residence right near our college. Now that we're all on the same page, I will take the opportunity to editorialize.

I want to make sure it's understood that my opinion on this is not all doom and gloom. There is always a growing need for student housing, and though a single apartment building won't solve the issue, it will certainly help curb the tendency towards unsafe housing conditions for the international student population. It may be argued that the true cause for such unsafe housing is cost rather than availability, and that the above-market rent for student housing makes it an ineffective tool to solve this issue. I have not done enough research to speak with authority on this topic. Regardless of how much good it will do, building an apartment building downtown is (as we have seen through the numerous delays) a difficult project for the university to take on, and it should not be without commendation that UofT has opened itself to liability by trying to offer more housing for its students.

Despite this, the university's handling of the situation leaves much to be desired. I find it puzzling that in their communications about the delay, the university did not once admit any sort of wrongdoing or issue any sort of apology for the great inconvenience they were placing on their students. It is not very Canadian of them! A statement from the Executive Director of Student Housing and Residence Experience issued to *The Varsity* and printed in their Sept. 9 article reads, "We regret the disappointment, frustration, and added stress caused by the delay ... We made every effort to have everything ready." I don't mean to call foul on the good executive director, but I have a very hard time believing that informing your students of a delay the day before move-in is their "every effort". Throwing such difficulty into the lives of your students the day before they move to your university does not communicate that you care about the stress which you place them under. While the university did its diligence in offering alternative housing to the displaced students, a cynical viewer might note that it did the bare minimum necessary to clear itself of legal liability and avoid causing temporary homelessness among many students. I am not aware that any further assistance was offered in helping these students with a second move-in after the first week of classes, and as of writing this article on October 2, there are still windows taped up all along the lower levels, with interior construction left to be completed. Whatever the truth may be, it is hard to deny that the terrible communication and unfinished living space reeks of a lack of care for the well-being of the students, or of incompetence in the management of the project.

It is no secret that UofT has a reputation for not caring about student mental health. Whatever the case, the university is definitely protective of its image, and has spent much effort into curating a reputation as an elite, top quality research institution. As a student, it is clear that a care for the student body is not part of this desired reputation. I am not so pessimistic about the state of student mental health, and I do not want to discount the many UofT staff who work hard to make our lives better. However, if the university ever wishes to turn their reputation around and appear to care about the well-being of their students, fiascos like that of the Oak House delay must be handled differently and with compassion.

Pinocchio Haunted My Childhood and Broke My Brain

Tiana Severiano

ARTS & CULTURE

Has a movie ever permeated your psyche so deeply that it has woven its way into your amygdala, establishing the very rules and cautions through which you live? A movie lost to time, forcing you alone to carry the burden of its memory? I, who was raised six feet away from the static TV screen, am no stranger to being haunted by lost ghosts, but one movie resides above all the late-night fever dreams—*The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1996).

I first encountered this movie on YTV's Big Fun Movie Night sometime around 2007, though there seem to be no records of this particular broadcast. Lying on my green leather couch, stagnant in time before all of its rips and tears, I witnessed my box TV perform a function I'd never seen before: broadcasting a satellite channel. Until that point, the glowing box had housed furry puppets, singing Australians, and big comfy couches on VHS, but never programming that could be interrupted midway with a commercial for Swiffer WetJet. YTV was strange and intense, and there was no way of knowing what I was watching. My father held the remote, and though I had known my way around it since I was in diapers, I wrongly trusted him with the task of putting on something enjoyable.

In that dark room, I was thus drawn to the moving image of a walking, talking, moving thing. It was a real puppet, but it didn't look like a Fraggle or a Muppet. It was wooden and disjointed and flapping around—I had thought that television wasn't real, but it looked as if it were interacting with the world I belonged to. Through adult eyes, I recognise that wooden freak of nature as New Line's attempt at a live-action Pinocchio, but as a human, I can't help but sense that someone had to summon that puppet and haunt it with a sacrificed soul.

Common Sense Media describes the film simply: *"Scary live-action version has violence, guns, and monsters."* I insist on adding to this list. Pinocchio gets kidnapped by Rob Schneider at the beginning of the film. I ask my dad to change the channel, but he's already intrigued, and it's a kids' movie, ideally age-appropriate. I begin to notice that my fireplace doesn't produce as much light as I need. My mom's already gone to sleep. I'm praying, in the only words I know, for a commercial break. Then, to prevent Geppetto from being imprisoned for debt, Pinocchio is sold. He's brought to an island of runaway and orphan boys. The boys shoot Pinocchio four times with a gun. *Brrap brrap*. Like a couple of dudes, the boys drink some beer and go on a rollercoaster.

What follows is a two-minute sequence of shifting close-ups, showing the boys horrifically transforming into donkeys on the rollercoaster—the beer was donkey transformation juice? They cry bloody murder for their parents until their screams twist into *HEE-HAWs*, and from the coaster carts, they're shipped off to carry cargo in the salt mines. Maybe my dad should've changed the channel at this point. Maybe he couldn't hear me crying over the donkey yelps, or maybe he just wanted me to toughen up. After a decade of chronic nightmares, I am shamelessly weaker.

I hold my eyes closed, I cherish the commercials, and I dread the scary Big Fun Movie Night bumper indicating the nightmare will resume. Pinocchio, now half-donkey, half-puppet, is swallowed by a whale and must climb out of its fleshy blowhole, then is turned into a real boy through the magic of his own tears. These details meant nothing to me as my brain began to program implications out of pure fear. When I yell for help in a time of need, will my words become unintelligible? Could animals be former humans, punished for their actions, now nonautonomous and slaughtered without sympathy? Could I be transformed against my will into a form that disgraces the habitation of my spirit? Can these awful feelings lingering in my mind ever be shaken off?

I slept sandwiched between my parents that night. And on-and-off for the following decade. Slappy the Dummy, Chucky, Annabelle—each sent me spiralling into sleepless benders for months after encountering them. I still believe, in the back of my mind, that some abysmal thing may come to life if I think about it too hard. And even now, I'm too scared to change the channel sometimes, too scared to disturb what's alive inside the screen.

The Things We Won't Do for Each Other

Katherine Chen

PERSONAL

It was a lazy Sunday afternoon, the kind meant for lingering walks or making an overdue dent in my pile of assignments. The sun was out, the air was light, and yet I was inside, standing in front of a grumpy registration desk clerk who was slowly processing a room key that wasn't even mine. Beside me was my friend, fresh off a long flight, disoriented by jetlag and the blur of a late arrival to her first semester. I was there to help her move in – to haul her luggage, to map out her classrooms, to guide her through the bureaucratic maze of a new country. On the outside, I looked like a dependable companion. But inside, all I could think about was the time slipping through my fingers and the work I could have been doing instead. But why? Why did I begrudge the time, even when her need was real and my presence mattered?

That's when I first began to realize: I have a fear of inconvenience.

What that means is, I'm reluctant to inconvenience myself for others. Not in the noble, anxious sense of "I don't want to burden anyone," but in the selfish sense of "please don't make me give up my Sunday afternoon." It's the instinct to protect my comfort, even when someone else might need me more.

I notice this fear of inconvenience in the small choices I make, in the ways I quietly pull away from others. I stopped going on grocery trips with friends because they felt like such an ordeal: we'd always buy too much, then haul the heavy bags across half the city. I was always exhausted when I got home, and all I could think about was the time and energy drained away from things I wanted to do for myself. Once, I even planned to organize an outing with my roommates – a chance to build connection – but I backed out. I told myself it was about conserving my limited social energy, but really, it was the same reluctance to be bothered and the suspicion that the effort wouldn't be worth what I got in return.

Why did giving up ten minutes, an errand, or a little energy feel so threatening?

I analyzed the opportunity cost: every hour I spent on someone else felt like an hour stolen from my own productivity. But the math is skewed. I can spend hours on my own projects without noticing, then act as though a brief inconvenience for someone else is a massive sacrifice. Ironically, doing the "bothersome" thing rarely takes as much as I imagine. Sometimes, it even replenishes me in ways I don't expect.

My real fear, I suspect, isn't just inconvenience. It's wasted time, lost control, and exposure of my limits. It leaves me treating relationships less like acts of generosity and more like scales to be balanced.

I don't think I'm alone in this. If anything, my reluctance to be inconvenienced feels less like a personal flaw and more like something I've absorbed from the culture around me. We've built entire systems to protect us from hassle: apps that deliver meals in minutes, one-click shopping, navigation that plots the fastest possible route. Convenience has shifted from being a luxury to a baseline expectation, and with it, our tolerance for detours and delays has eroded.

The danger is that we start to see other people's needs as interruptions to our carefully streamlined lives. But community has always been made of precisely those interruptions – the favours, the errands, the messy ways we show up for one another. If I shrink from inconvenience in my friendships, maybe I'm just reenacting the same detachment society now prizes: comfort over connection.

What I've begun to realize is that inconvenience is not the enemy of connection but its proof. Waiting in a long line with someone, carrying the heavy box, making the call I "don't have time" for – these are the small sacrifices that stitch us together.

When I think back to that long day helping my friend move in, I remember the weight of the suitcases, the wait at the registration desk, and the hours I thought I had "lost." But I also remember the relief on her face when she wasn't alone. Maybe inconvenience is precisely that: the proof that someone showed up, even when it cost them something. Perhaps inconvenience isn't what I should fear, but what I should choose.

Tate McRae Review

Rebecca

ARTS & CULTURE

I got off at Union Station at 6:30 p.m., arms looped around my friend. I'd never taken the subway here before, except maybe to hop on the GO train or the VIA Rail. The station is huge; it is its own little underground city, with shops and bakeries, food courts, and about a million hallways with twenty-foot ceilings.

Even though neither of us had navigated this huge modern maze before, we both knew where to go—just follow the sea of knee-high boots, leather jackets, and tucked-in jerseys. Look-alike Tate McRaes. I, of course—dressed in laced Dr. Martens with red-tongued flames, a mini skirt, and a lipstick-red corset top—fit right in. My friend grinned at me, "I think there are more people here dressed for a concert than in regular clothes." And it's probably true. The Rogers Centre can hold up to 55,000 people for a concert, and on August 20th, it sure seemed like every one of those seats was filled.

On the Miss Possessive Tour poster, overshadowed by the huge orange "TATE" are the words "with special guest Zara Larsson." To be honest, I'd barely known her apart from a couple songs and the rainbows and dolphins permanently associated with her song 'Symphony.' But in just forty minutes, I became her biggest fan. She appeared in tiny ripped jeans and bright neon bralettes. Knee-high boots, but they were hot pink instead of leather and dark like Tate's. Her voice was raspy and full, with a little country note. Her backup dancers wore alternating blue and pink sports bra-like tops—like a gender-reveal party. She stood in the centre, six-pack abs popping out like they were part of her costume. The confident way she carried herself onstage made her look like Pilates Barbie. Commanding and strong. Despite only knowing a couple of her songs beforehand, you best believe that the first thing I did after that night was download all her songs.

Tate strutted out to her tour's namesake song and a screaming crowd, sporting a skimpy ocean blue set and flanked by her male calisthenic backup dancers.

(continued on next page)

The Air is Light Blue Today

Rowan Parkinson

PLAYLIST

New versions of myself appear in the mirror quicker than they used to, the people I love become blurry outlines, and I miss home. It's difficult to pinpoint exactly when things began changing. Maybe when I took the photos off my wall. Now, the hours bleed into each other, my memories entangle. Yesterday is today is tomorrow is all of the days I will ever see. I feel a dense fog settling in .

In these quiet moments, I revisit the songs that help me find comfort in monotony. They let me hold on to the people and places I have loved. They are gentle echoes reminding me that I am alive, focusing my thoughts, reflecting the clear blue sky back to me.

"What I Wanted to Hold" unravels like a faded memory pared back to its most striking details. Sprague's voice is weightless, suspended over fluttering guitar and hushed keys. Droning strings stretch beneath, steady and stable. *I'm alive and I'm okay | the air is light blue today*, she sings, a simple affirmation that becomes the heart of this playlist.

"Dragon New Warm Mountain I Believe In You" begins with soft brushes and fingerpicked guitar, a gentle pattern that spirals around Lenker's steady voice. She is bold in her delivery, her high register lilting and comforting. She spills out, *I believe in you | even when you need to | recoil,* grounding the song in quiet assurance.

In "Band Sit Together," Robertson's words are barely discernible, fragments that drift in and out of focus. The soft familiarity of her hums accompanies the bright, plucky guitar. In "Good Morning, Al," Evenson's whispery voice weaves through tight acoustic picking, cutting through the stillness. Like Robertson, her delivery is delicate, intimate, and wrapped in warmth.

"Tears Are In Your Eyes" moves slowly, its uniform bass line and soft kick drum providing an unwavering rhythm. Hubley's voice, layered with Kaplan's harmonies, draws soft circles in your head, reminding you that *darkness always turns into the dawn*. There's a tenderness in the song's unhurried nature that invites you to lean in.

"Hold On Magnolia" unfurls like a mournful waltz, electric guitar weeping in long, aching notes. Simple snare rolls and drowsy keys land heavy on the downbeat, lending weight to the intermittent silence. Molina drawls, *hold on Magnolia | to that great highway moon*, as the song morphs into a mellow cry.

"20220302 – sarabande" is more of a sketch than a song, a delicate piano composition that's been stripped to its barest form. Notes linger and vanish, each one carefully placed, as if withholding something. Finally, "Deep Blue Day" drifts by like a dream, carrying smooth electronic drones layered with the gentle murmur of pedal steel guitar. Its repetitive melody offers a place to centre yourself. We close on a wistful note.

I listen to these songs and blink through the countless versions of myself. I am standing outside my childhood home for the last time, the clouds moving faster than usual. I am sitting on my uncle's porch with my sister, unable to discern where the water meets the sky. I am tapping away at my dad's drum kit, while patches of dusk creep through dense branches. I am watching the geese glide past, already saying goodbye to a new friend. I am on the train again and again and again. More places, more spaces, more blue days ahead. Sprague's voice in my head: *When the summer goes long | when the water stays warm | I remember the faces of everyone I've loved.*

I am stepping outside. The air is still light blue today.

1. What I Wanted to Hold – Florist
2. Dragon New Warm Mountain I Believe in You – Big Thief
3. Band Sit Together – Joanne Robertson
4. Good Morning, Al – Ally Evenson
5. Tears Are in Your Eyes – Yo La Tengo
6. Hold On Magnolia - Songs: Ohia
7. 20220302 – sarabande – Ryuichi Sakamoto
8. Deep Blue Day – Brian Eno

A Ghostly Invasion

Jiaxin Shi

SHORT FICTION

It was late one Hallow's Eve, when the trick-or-treaters had begun disappearing and the candles in the jack o'lanterns were dimly flickering, when Victoria spied the two figures encroaching on her home. Perhaps they had seen the thicket of dead, barren trees and mistaken them for Halloween decorations, but whatever their intentions, she did not welcome them.

The first was a woman, short and scrawny, her eyes small, her nose flat and buttonlike. She was young, supple, and beautiful. A pang of jealousy stabbed her soul. In the past, she would've been the type of girl Victoria herself would have liked to become, or, at the very least, befriend. Now, her form was old and decrepit.

The other, a male of similar age, was tall and burly. His light sandy hair framed his face in tight ringlets and he had pale grey eyes. He too was beautiful and, in the past, would have been very appealing to Victoria, but not as much as the girl.

She watched them imperiously from a window in the attic, glaring down with black eyes like dark embers on a moon-shaped face. When they entered the house, she flew downstairs in a furor. There, she hastened to hide behind a dreary set of drapes. They fluttered with her every movement, emitting a low moaning noise which echoed throughout the halls. As the last vestiges of wind curled through their hair, the girl remarked, "It's odd. I have the strangest feeling about this house."

From behind the nearly transparent curtains, Victoria watched, her eyes long having adjusted to the dim, murky shadows which the eyes of others could not penetrate.

"It seems as though something is watching us."

The boy laughed and shook his head. "You're overly paranoid, Hannah."

The two of them were terribly annoying, not merely in their presence but also their youth and vitality which in turn cast her in a dim light. Once more, envy took root in her spirit. The sight of the young ones upset her and she wished she could return to the days of her youth. Still, she was tired from eating and earlier commotions, so she resolved to bid them leave.

As such, she shifted to the dining room. A rickety mahogany table stood at its center, with a rusting music box on top. She jiggled it vigorously, inducing the entire table to shake doubly so and the broken box to begin playing a sinisterly monotonous tune of creaks and groans.

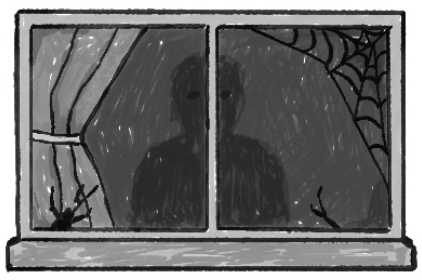
"Did you hear that?"

"It must have been the wind."

In one last bid, she scurried to the front door which had been left slightly ajar and slammed it open with all her might. It swung open with a great gust of wind, spraying dust and old cobwebs everywhere. The bang it created as it collided with the derelict walls reverberated throughout the hallway. There could be no clearer sign of her wishes.

"Really, I think we should leave!" Hannah exclaimed. She began to make for the door, but the boy held her back.

"Wait," he pleaded. "How often might we get to explore a haunted house?"



Victoria hovered in place, irritated. She had given every indication they were not welcome in her home, yet the boy insisted on staying. Suddenly, the generous spirit which had possessed her earlier left, along with her intention of permitting them both to leave. She would have at least one of them. To eat or to wear, she would decide afterwards. So she drew herself up to her full height of several meters and flew in spiraling circles, shrieking, until she reached the crumbling ceiling. Wisps of hair extended from her skull in all directions as the skirt of her dress, frayed and decaying, puffed and billowed, producing the illusion of grand size and emanating a stench of rot.

The two adolescents cowered immediately. Hannah, who had wrenched her hand free from the boy's grasp, scrambled to her feet and sprinted for the door. Victoria watched her go with a disinterested eye, but the boy, who remained trembling on the floor, she beheld with more scrutiny.

She floated closely to him, regarding his young face. It was stricken with fear, full of tears and whimpering as she drew near.

"Please," he croaked. "Please let me go."

Silently, she touched her forehead to his and pressed forward until, seamlessly, her ghostly form slipped into his body. When he opened his eyes again, they were black like the abyss.

(continued from previous page)

From the start, Tate moved only like one with a dance background like hers would. She effortlessly combined her electric and textured vocals with powerful and flexible moves, at one point even wrapping herself around a pole. (Her show, while highly entertaining, was definitely not family-friendly.) While most of her songs on the setlist were from her latest album, she included both fan favorites from previous albums, such as 'exes' and 'run for the hills,' as well as nostalgic, older pieces such as 'One Day.' Every song was unique in its choreography, and overall, the concert offered an amazing range of emotions and moods.

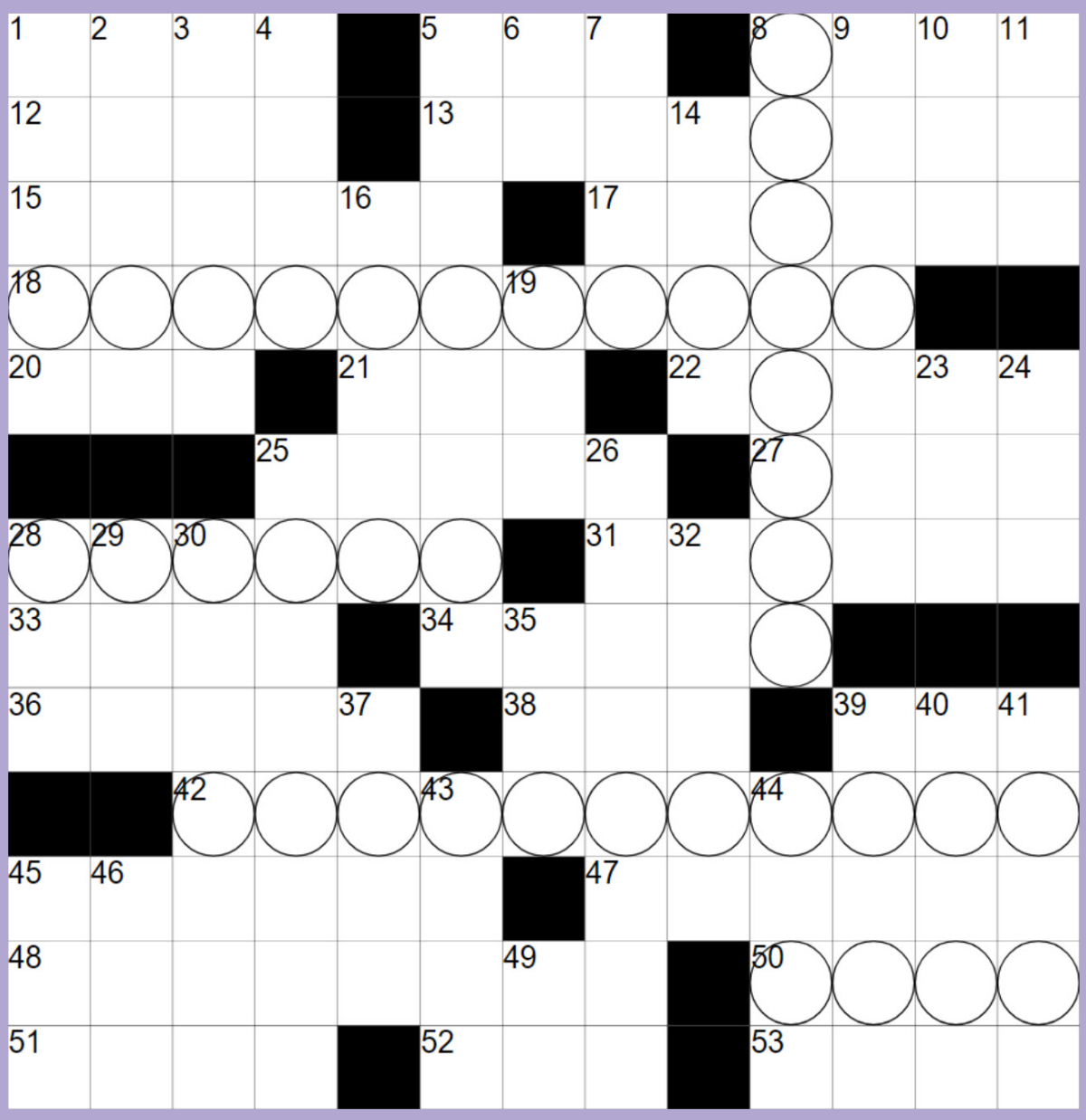
In her third act, Tate appeared not from the back of the stage like before, but from a side entrance in a long and regal purple dress. In all its ruffles and volume, it juxtaposed her tiny biker shorts and sports bra from just minutes before. Somber, she climbed the circular stage in the middle of the arena, and, despite her long acrylic nails, sat at a keyboard to sing her earlier and softer songs. Under the light of the fans' iPhone lights, she talked about her journey to the artist she is now, from her first song at 17, to now at 22. The interlude-like act provided a delightful change of pace to her concert, and showed yet another aspect of her performing prowess.

Oftentimes, as artists rush to change from one costume to the next, the fans themselves are left in their own awkward moments, the background tracks not quite living up to the electrifying energy the live artist had. However, each one of McRae's transitions was filled with either a cinematic documentary-style edit of her songs and her tour, or once, an exhilarating solo by a backup dancer and a live drummer. It was precisely these small moments, filled with care and detail, that left no holes in the show.

All in all, this concert was once-in-a-lifetime. The energy sustained throughout the entire duration, across both performers, was mesmerizing. The choreography was stunning. The ebbs and flows of music, the structure of the set list, and the curated props all melded together to create not just a cohesive but an immersive experience. As much as I had listened to her tracks on Spotify before, nothing could prepare me for the live performance that I had the privilege to attend.

Sixty

by Rick Lu

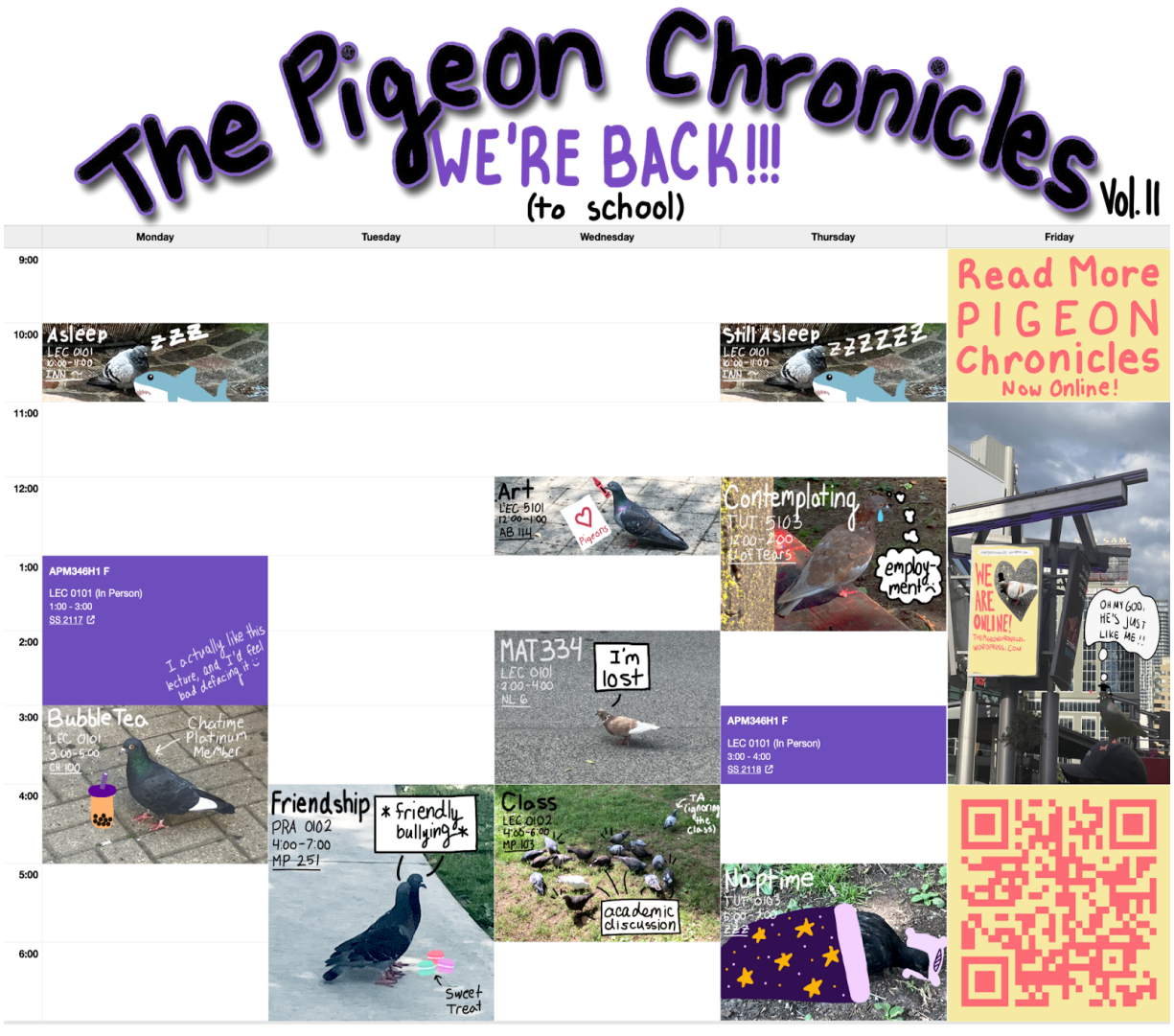


ACROSS

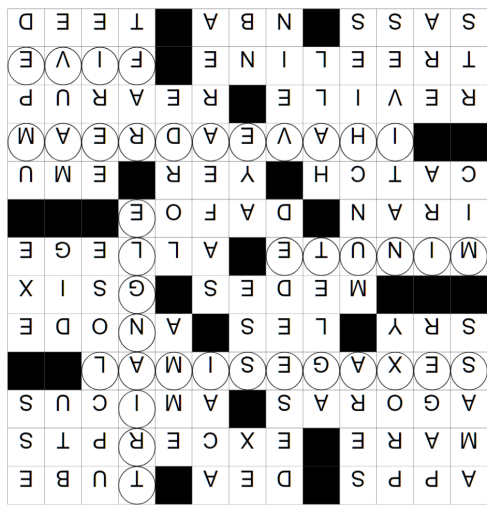
1 Phone icons
5 US enforcers of the Controlled Substances Act
8 Toothpaste locale
12 Mule's mother
13 Snippets
15 Greek gathering places from which the words "category" and "allegory" evolved from
17 ___ curiae, Latin for "friend of the court"
18 Base 60 number system used by Babylonians and Sumerians
20 "my b"
21 "___ Misérables"
22 Cathode's counterpart
25 Ancient Persians
27 Minor seventh above A5
28 One sixtieth of a degree
31 Assert
33 Country between Iraq and Afghanistan
34 Actor Willem
36 Hidden downside
38 "___ out!"
39 Flightless bird
42 Famous 60s speech
45 Lambaste
47 Rise, as a horse
48 Foliage limit
50 The alternating group of degree ___ is the smallest non-abelian simple group, with 60 elements
51 Cheek
52 Warriors org.
53 Prepared to golf

DOWN

1 Gather
2 Beeper
3 Intermediary
4 Frenchman's "will be"
5 Prepared, as a chili
6 Former
7 Type of berry
8 Polygon whose angles are all 60 degrees
9 Detailed viewing distance
10 Unit of heat (abbr.)
11 What comes before tee
14 Actress Stone or Watson or Mackey or Roberts
16 Shoelace end
19 Opposite of NNW
23 Miner's action
24 Application file type
25 Stoner's concern
26 Like a couch in "the floor is lava"
28 Singer's implement (abbr.)
29 UK paramilitary group during the Troubles
30 Aborigines
32 "Melodrama" and "Virgin" singer
35 Pirate's affirmation
37 Liminal space
39 Giving heebie-jeebies
40 Pale purple
41 Officiated a baseball game
43 Body tube
44 Castaway's vehicle
45 Not a turn-based kind of game (abbr.)
46 Section of history
49 Document's "get this"



The beaver is a pretty good mascot, but what about a giant inflatable professor costume for Harold Innis?



in the 70s, the

Innis Mosaic

was a way for the Herald community to share their thoughts and stories across the college and campus from confessions to updates, if not bar recommendations.

As of 2025, here's what we have to say...

i'm a dude who's gonna cosplay as a girl to infiltrate frats. wish me luck, folks.

Professor: So the reciprocal of 15 is about zero point zero six-seven
Convocation Hall: *erupts into uncontrollable giggles*
Me: *filled with despair*

"I don't know how to feel about seeing trash and being excited about it" - some volunteer at a community clean-up

I am the biggest fan of Rick Lu's crosswords - K